

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 AID-05 AGRE-00 EB-08 FDRE-00

SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11

PC-01 IO-13 HA-05 DODE-00 HEW-04 /098 W

-----021078 311346Z /43

R 311101Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2153

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 KATHMANDU 2787

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SPOP

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING GLOBAL
PROBLEMS - POPULATION GROWTH AND ADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION

REF: STATE 107370

1. SUMMARY: WORLD WIDE PROBLEMS OF INADEQUATE FOOD
PRODUCTION AND RAPID POPULATION GROWTH DESCRIBED REF-
TEL CLEARLY EXIST IN SPADES IN NEPAL. EMBASSY IS, HOWEVER,
FORTUNATE IN THAT IT HAS HAD A DIALOGUE OF LONG STANDING WITH
THE GON ON THESE ISSUES, ONE THAT HAS PRODUCED GENERAL AGREE-
MENT ON THEIR IMPORTANCE TO NEPAL'S LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT.
AS RESULT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PUT MAJOR STRESS ON ASSISTING
THE GON TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS TO RESPOND TO THESE
ISSUES, RATHER THAN ARGUING UNDULY OVER PRIORITIES. THIS
GENERALLY SHARED APPRECIATION OF THE PROBLEMS DOES NOT PRECLUDE
SOME DIFFERENCES OVER EMPHASIS AND MEANS NOR DOES IT DIMINISH
THE PROBLEMS STILL AHEAD. BUT IT DOES MEAN THAT IN NEPAL
OUR DIALOGUE CAN BE CONCENTRATED ON PROBLEM SOLVING RATHER
THAN PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PROBLEMS DESCRIBED REFTel IN WORLD WIDE
CONTEXT ARE CERTAINLY MAJOR CONCERNS FOR NEPAL.

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THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION GROWTH RATE IS
ESTIMATED AT 2.4PERCENT ANNUALLY. THIS RAPID GROWTH HAS
INTENSIFIED PRESSURES ON NEPAL'S LIMITED NATURAL
RESOURCES, IN TURN CREATING NEW PROBLEMS, AND HAS
ERODED THE ALREADY LIMITED IMPROVEMENTS IN INCOME
LEVELS. WHILE THE NUMBER OF FAMILY PLANNING ACCEPTORS
HAS RISEN DRAMATICALLY IN RECENT YEARS, FACT REMAINS

THAT LESS THAN THREE PERCENT OF COUPLES OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE ARE CURRENTLY PROTECTED BY FAMILY PLANNING METHODS. ON THE AGRICULTURAL SIDE, WHILE NEPAL REMAINS A FOOD SURPLUS COUNTRY, YIELDS ARE LOW AND PRODUCTION HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY STAGNANT. TRADITIONALLY, NEPAL HAS BEEN ABLE TO MEET ITS GROWING NEEDS BY EXTENDING AGRICULTURAL CULTIVATION INTO NEW LAND AREAS, BUT THIS AVENUE IS NOW LARGELY FORECLOSED. NEAPLESE FARMERS NOW BEING FORCED TO FARM MORE MARGINAL LANDS IN TERAJ AND HILLS. IN SHORT, NOT ONLY HAS STAGNATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION CUR-TAILED OVERALL GROWTH OF THIS OVERWHELMINGLY AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY, BUT IT RAISES THE THREAT OF NEPAL NOT BEING ABLE TO MEET GROWING DOMESTIC DEMAND IN NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE.

3. WHILE FOOD PRODUCTION AND POPULATION GROWTH ARE CLEARLY MAJOR PROBLEMS FOR NEPAL, WE DO HAVE ADVANTAGE THAT USG-GON DIALOGUE ON THESE ISSUES IS OF LONG-STANDING. WE HAVE, OF COURSE, EXTENDED HISTORY OF PROVIDING BILATERAL ASSISTANCE TO NEPAL -- BOTH THROUGH AID AND PEACE CORPS. IN DETERMINING THE TARGETS OF OUR EFFORT, WE HAVE HAD CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH GON AT ALL LEVELS -- FROM MY CONTACTS WITH KING AND KEY MINISTERS, THROUGH SIMILAR MEETINGS ON PART OF AID AND PEACE CORPS DIRECTORS, TO ENGINEERING LEVEL

CONTACTS. ONE OF THE RESULTS, FROM BEGINNING, HAS BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OUR VARIOUS PROGRAMS IN AGRICULTURE CONCENTRATING ON IN-CREASED PRODUCTION. PERHAPS IN EARLIER YEARS GON PLACED LESSER DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE ON THIS AREA FROM STANDPOINT OF OVERALL PRIORITIES, BUT THAT IS NO LONGER CASE. MINISTER OF FINANCE BHEKH THAPA, FOR EXAMPLE, AT PARIS MEETING OF NEPAL AID GROUP EARLIER THIS MONTH, SPOKE OF GOVERNMENT'S DISAPPOINTMENT IN LIMITED ACHIEVE-MENTS OF AGRICULTURAL GOALS UNDER CURRENT FIVE YEAR PLAN AND CALLED FOR REVIEW OF PATTERN OF INVESTMENT IN THIS SECTOR. IN MY DISCUSSIONS SINCE ARRIVING HERE LAST SUMMER, I HAVE FOUND GON LEADERS TOTALLY CONSISTENT IN IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACH TO AGRICULTURE AND SPECIFICALLY TO INCREASING PRODUCTION LEVELS BOTH TO MEET NEPAL'S OWN NEEDS BUT ALSO IN FURTHERING EXPORT GROWTH. THAT THEIR SUCCESS HAS BEEN LIMITED IS REFLECTION OF EXTENT OF PROBLEMS INVOLVED, WHICH IN TURN FULLY JUSTIFIES ASSISTANCE EFFORT WE ARE DEVOTING TO THIS AREA. IN THIS CONNECTION, I BELIEVE THAT COOPERATION BETWEEN AID AND PEACE CORPS

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TO FIELD OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION HAS BEEN EXEMPLARY
AND IS PATTERN WE INTEND TO BUILD UPON (WITH GON'S
FULL BLESSING) IN NEW EFFORTS SCHEDULED FOR IMPLEMENTATION
STARTING IN FY 79.

4. EFFORTS IN RESPONDING TO POPULATION GROWTH HAVE BEEN
SOMEWHAT MORE RECENT BOTH FOR US AND GON AND ARE A BIT
MORE CONTROVERSIAL. AGAIN, HOWEVER, THERE IS NO
QUESTION THAT GON APPRECIATES SERIOUSNESS AND SIGNIFICANCE
OF PROBLEM. ITS FAMILY PLANNING EFFORTS, WHILE STILL
BARELY TOUCHING SURFACE, ARE RECEIVING BOTH SOLID SUPPORT
WITHIN GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS HIGH LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE
AMONG PEOPLE. HOWEVER, IN ADDITION TO EXPANDING THESE
EFFORTS (AND WE ARE HELPING IN THIS), THERE IS A GREATER
NEED TO DEVELOP AN OVERALL POPULATION STRATEGY AS WELL AS TO
PROVIDE MORE HIGH LEVEL PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THESE PROGRAMS.
I HAVE DISCUSSED THESE ISSUES WITH THE KING AND WITH PRIME
MINISTER, AND IT NOW APPEARS THAT LATTER WILL ASSUME DIRECT
LEADERSHIP OF POPULATION POLICIES COORDINATION BOARD--A
BODY CREATED SEVERAL YEARS AGO TO LOOK AT BROAD STRATEGY
BUT TO DATE LARGELY DORMANT. THIS SHOULD GIVE SUBSTANTIAL
BOOST TO POPULATION CONTROL PLANNING PROCESS. ON ISSUES
OF PUBLIC LEADERSHIP, POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES CONTINUE
TO IMPINGE, SITUATION NO DOUBT CONTRIBUTED TO BY REACTIONS
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IN NEIGHBORING INDIA TO MRS. GHANDHI'S WELL PUBLICIZED
POPULATION PROGRAMS. BUT WE CONTINUE TO ADDRESS THIS NEED
AT VARIOUS LEVELS AND HAVE HOPES FOR A MORE ACTIVE ROLE.

5. IN THIS CONNECTION IT MAY BE RELEVANT TO NOTE THAT
MAY 31 I AM ATTENDING INAUGURAL SESSION OF CONTRACEPTIVES
RETAIL SALES PROJECT IN KATHMANDU. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING
THAT NEPAL IS OUT IN FRONT IN MOVING AHEAD ON THIS WORLD
WIDE AID PROJECT.

6. ABOVE DOES NOT PROVIDE ANY EARTH SHAKING NEW
SUGGESTIONS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS IN DEALING WITH
THESE TWO ISSUES. I DO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT AID-PEACE
CORPS COOPERATION IN AGRICULTURE, GETTING NEEDED
EXPERTISE INTO FIELD WHILE MINIMIZING PROBLEMS CONNECTED
WITH A SURPLUS OF HIGH PAID EXPATRIOT TECHNICIANS, HAS
BEEN EFFECTIVE. LIKEWISE, AID'S INNOVATIVE EFFORTS IN
AREA OF POPULATION STRATEGY WILL HOPEFULLY ASSIST GON IN
ITS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT EFFORTS TO PUT POPULATION GROWTH AND
FAMILY PLANNING INTO BROADER SOCIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT.
EVEN WHERE OUR APPROACHES ARE MORE TRADITIONAL (WITH THE
ADVANTAGE OF PROVEN EFFECTIVENESS) I AM ENCOURAGED THAT WE
AND GON ARE ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ON PROBLEM SOLVING, AVOIDING
DEFUSION OF ENERGIES THROUGH DEBATING PRIORITIES. WE WILL
CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE WITH THE GON ON THESE PROBLEMS STARTING
AT HIGHEST LEVELS, AND WILL REPORT RESULTS. BASIC POSITIVE
POINT IN ALL THIS IS THAT WE CAN CONCENTRATE ON GETTING
JOB DONE RATHER THAN HAVING TO CONVINCE THE NEPALESE
IT NEEDS DOING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POPULATION, PRODUCTION, POLICIES, AMBASSADORS, FOODS, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KATHMA02787
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780227-0377
Format: TEL
From: KATHMANDU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978054/aaaaacxa.tel
Line Count: 197
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 98348c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 107370
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2635670
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING GLOBAL PROBLEMS - POPULATION GROWTH AND ADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION
TAGS: SPOP, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/98348c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014